



Conservation Management System (Wildlife Land)

Alabama Guide Sheet No. AL 5



What is a Conservation Management System*?

A Conservation Management System on wildlife land is combinations of conservation and wildlife management practices that allows for the creation and management of wildlife habitat in a way that meets the landowner/user's objectives while minimizing negative impacts on the resources and the environment on and off the farm. Conservation Management Systems on wildlife land vary depending on type of wildlife species targeted, existing land cover, and other landowner objectives.

Resource Concerns Related to Wildlifeland

Resource concerns in wildlife land include availability of food, cover, and water and wildlife population, diversity, and health.

Availability of Food, Cover, and Water

Wildlife like other living things requires food and water to survive. Insufficient food and/or water can greatly restrict the population of wildlife in an area. The type of food supplied through food plots and better management of existing species will impact on the diversity of wildlife within a tract of land. Cover too is an essential component to wildlife populations. Whether grasses, shrubs, trees, or combinations of these—size, location, and layout is critical to encourage and sustain wildlife populations.

Population, Diversity, and Health

Food, cover, and water as described above have traditionally limited wildlife populations. They have also been limited by predators and human development or use of land resources, i.e. pasture crops, etc. To increase populations and diversity of wildlife landowners will have to reverse some of these man-made impediments.

Wildlife Land Conservation Management System

All land management practices affect wildlife. Crop rotations, pasture management systems, forest management, and even urban development has significant impacts on wildlife numbers and types in an area. Private landowners in the state control over 70 percent of the land area and can significantly improve the habitat to encourage population growth and diversity of wildlife. The following are examples of habitats that can be developed on private lands to encourage wildlife species and can be compatible with other land uses.

Essential Practices

The essential practices in developing wildlife habitat are those that provide the food, cover, and water. These essential practices will also vary depending on existing site conditions and the target wildlife species.

* Conservation Management System is also referred to as a Resource Management System in the National Planning Procedures Handbook.

Managing Forestland for Wildlife

Improve wildlife habitat in forestland by thinning and prescribed burning. These practices increase light filtering to the ground and reduce litter to encourage the growth of forbs and other understory plants for food, cover and nesting habitat. Creating openings in forestland and managing these for natural growth or planting of native legumes, forbs, grasses, and shrubs. Disking in these areas also encourages growth of these desirable food and cover plant species. Fertilizing and liming naturally occurring forbs, shrubs, and trees where easily accessible will increase palatability and nutrient availability to wildlife. Benefited wildlife includes: bobwhite quail, eastern wild turkey, deer, and many types of migratory birds.

Longleaf Pine Plantation

Longleaf pines are an excellent forest product, but also creates an excellent habitat for wildlife. Longleaf pine plantations also provide habitat for endangered species such as the gopher tortoise and indigo snake. Site preparation and management is critical in establishing this species, and prescribed burning is a common tool in managing the understory and ground covers conducive to wildlife. Benefited wildlife includes bobwhite quail, deer, indigo snake, and gopher tortoise.

Bottomland Hardwood

Maintaining or planting of native hardwood trees along streams, rivers, and sloughs where soils are moist to wet most of the year are excellent habitats for wildlife. Restricting harvesting of desirable trees in these areas is the best way to maintain these areas, but in some cases, planting is needed to reestablish this kind of habitat. Site preparation and selected herbicides are needed to insure establishment of these species. Once established, management is minimal to maintain the habitat. Benefited wildlife

includes migratory waterfowl, eastern wild turkey, whitetail deer, and many types of migratory birds.

Early Successional Habitat Renovation/Improvement

In some cases whole field areas are dedicated to wildlife management especially if bobwhite quail is the targeted species. The objective of this type management is to have a variety of cover heights and species to provide food and cover for the desired species. Burning, disking, or herbicides can be used to keep the field in an early successional habitat. These practices prevent the maturing of trees that would change the habitat into forestland. A rotation of burning, disking, or herbicide treatment on about one-third of the field per year provides a continuous recycling of early successional plants. Care should be taken to perform management operations prior to or following nesting seasons. Benefited wildlife includes bobwhite quail, migratory birds, deer, and eastern wild turkey.

Potential Effects of Conservation Management Systems on Wildlifeland

- Improve food, water, and cover for wildlife
- Improves health of wildlife
- Increases populations of desired wildlife
- Maintains or can improve habitat for endangered species
- Improves water quality in streams adjacent to wildlifeland

References

Other Alabama Guide Sheets related to this Conservation Management System are: AL 338, 338A, 612B, 645, 645A, 645B, 645C, 645D, 645E, and 645F.

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